

A Cultural Comparative Study of White and Black Colours in Spanish and Arabic Adages

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Abstract—The use of colours in human communication and expression is deeply rooted in cultural values and symbolic meanings. White and black are two colours that hold significant cultural history and symbolism. This comparative study investigates the cultural connotative meanings of white and black in both Spanish and Arabic adages. By comparing the cultural connotations associated with white and black in Spanish and Arabic adages, the paper highlights the similarities and differences these colours invoke in their respective cultures. The comparative study examines the adages' context and cultural background to gain insights into how colours convey meanings and reflect cultural values.

Index Terms—adages, white, black, connotation, culture

I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language and culture is significant as language is not only a means of communication but also reflects the values, beliefs, and practices that constitute a certain culture. Mastering a language requires an understanding of its associated culture. Language is crucial for preserving and transmitting culture, allowing individuals to communicate traditions, history, and beliefs. The link between language and culture is vital for comprehending and appreciating diverse cultures globally. Evans (2006) and Geremew (2014) emphasize the undeniably deep relationship between language and culture. Language both influences and is influenced by culture, serving as a crucial means of cultural transmission, expression, and identity formation. Understanding the interplay between language and culture is essential for comprehending the complexities of human communication and the richness of diverse societies.

Culture-specific items are words and expressions that are peculiar to a particular culture and may not be understood by learners from other cultures. Language serves as a reflection and maintainer of culture, while culture influences the development of language. The inseparable interaction between language and culture highlights their mutual influence and importance in understanding and communicating within a cultural context (Persson, 2015).

According to the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (2020), adages are short, memorable sayings that express a commonly held belief or piece of wisdom. They are often used to convey a moral or lesson and are based on experience and observation. Adages are typically passed down through generations and are part of a culture's oral tradition. Examples of adages include "Where there's smoke, there's fire", "slow and steady wins the race," and "honesty is the best policy". The adage is the result of experience; therefore, it has a practical value. Through adages, we learn social behaviors, moral concepts, natural resources, and endlessly practical and useful information about life in general. The adage is empirical: it is born out of the experience accumulated over centuries in a community or in a social group, therefore, it is capable of offering a synthetic, concise, and adjusted assessment regarding all possible topics. A concrete fact refers to a general experience as long as that fact has been repeated under the same conditions, and the same result has been obtained (Al-Zamajshari, 1987; Abu Sofa, 1993).

Adages and proverbs are closely related and are sometimes used interchangeably. Proverbs are typically longer and more complex than adages. They often consist of a metaphor or an analogy that requires some explanation or interpretation to fully understand its meaning in a given context. For example, "A stitch in time saves nine" is a proverb that means taking care of a small problem now can prevent it from becoming bigger later. Adages, on the other hand, are shorter and more straightforward than proverbs. They usually express a simple truth or observation in a pithy and memorable way. For example, "Actions speak louder than words" is an adage that means what you do is more important than what you say. In summary, all proverbs are adages, but not all adages are proverbs. Proverbs are a specific type of adages that follow a particular structure, while adages can take many forms and can convey a wide range of messages.

Comprehensive research delves into the interaction between adages and culture, accentuating their reciprocal impact. Scholars utilize a variety of approaches, encompassing historical, linguistic, and societal dimensions, to decipher adages. This practice underscores the substantial academic investigation of the adage-culture connection, where the Cognitive

Semantics Perspective stands out as an essential strategy for comprehending their significance in diverse cultural contexts (Turki & Imran, 2021). One noteworthy framework in this field is the Great Chain Metaphor Theory (GCMT), which involves applying a general-level schema to multiple specific-level schemas that share a common general-level structure (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). Furthermore, scholars such as Bock and Brewer (1980), Temple and Honeck (1999), Gibbs (2001, 2002), and Gibbs and Strom (1997) have delved into how both the figurative and literal meanings of proverbs interact with individuals' minds, ultimately influencing their ability to achieve precise and contextually appropriate interpretations. In addition, Najwi's research, entitled "Linguistic Interpretation of Proverbs in the Kenyang Language" (2019), explores the impact of mental imagery associated with proverbs on individuals' cognitive processes.

According to Sahan et al. (2021), some adages are not easy to be understood since the linguistic structure and the proposition of the expressions are incompatible. In other words, there is no one-to-one relationship between form and function. In order to comprehend such expressions, one needs a linguistic and cultural background in that language. Moreno (2005) and Mohammed et al. (2021) propose that adages are a universal phenomenon in human communication. They are present in nearly every language and culture across the world, making them a common feature of human expression. Adages serve as a powerful tool for transmitting cultural values, beliefs, and experiences from generation to generation. Meider (2004) states that adages are not only a universal aspect of human communication found in various languages and cultures but also serve as a means of transmitting cultural values and experiences and promote connections among individuals through shared wisdom and knowledge.

In his renowned book "al-Iqd al-Farid" (the Unique Necklace), the Andalusian author, Ibn Abd Rabbu, (1983, p. 213) writes: "Adages (الأقوال المأثورة) last longer than poetry and are more respectable than discourse. Nothing is more usual than them nor does it reach a greater diffusion than what they achieve to the point that it is said: more common than an adage". Guimei, in his article "English and Chinese Cultural Connotation of Colour Words in Comparison" (2009), affirms that different cultures have different expressions using colours in general. The connotative meanings are different from one culture to another. For example, the white colour in the Chinese culture shows the Chinese's material and spiritual disgust. It is also a symbol of death, lifeless performance, and bad omen. In the Arab World, the white colour suggests purity of heart and happiness, opposite to its meaning in the Chinese culture. These differences in connotations can be due to a variety of factors, including cultural traditions, historical events, and religious beliefs. Ababneh et al. state that: "Connotative meanings are culturally distant and they resemble things differently even within the same culture. These meanings are open-ended and can be interpreted differently" (Ababneh et al., 2023, p. 527).

This research methodology involves the systematic classification of adages specifically associated with the colors black and white in both Arabic and Spanish, accompanied by an examination of their cultural significance within the linguistic contexts of these languages. A total of 65 such adages were carefully organized into distinct tables, revealing both commonalities and distinctions in cultural connotations between the two languages. While it is expected that Spanish and Arabic harbor unique cultural nuances for these expressions, the study suggests that within this bilingual framework (i.e., Arabic and Spanish), many expressions share fundamental thematic elements, despite the variations in their linguistic structures. This investigation exclusively focuses on adages found in the Arabic and Spanish languages that pertain to the colors black and white. These expressions were drawn from traditional linguistic sources, primarily adages. The primary aim of the analysis is to elucidate cultural connotations, occasionally making reference to metaphorical meanings for illustrative purposes only.

II. WHITE AND BLACK IN ARABIC AND SPANISH ADAGES

Colours play a remarkable role in people's daily lives and intercultural communication due to their cultural significance, emotional impact, communication and symbolic values. They provoke personal and identity expression. Understanding and respecting the role of colours in different cultural contexts can enhance effective communication and foster intercultural understanding. Numerous studies, including a significant one by Adams and Osgood in 1973, have explored how color meanings are influenced by various cultural contexts. Their study focused on the semantics of basic color terms across 20 different languages, employing advanced technology for analysis. Notably, they found that "white" consistently had a more positive connotation than "black" in all 23 linguistic and cultural groups across Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The color "red" exhibited complex connotations, varying with context, while "yellow" generally had positive associations in most languages, except for Hong Kong Cantonese, where it was linked to pornography. Overall, their research illuminated the intricate nature of color semantics, revealing a preference for blue and green shades over red and yellow in semantic evaluations (Al-Adaileh, 2012).

As emphasized by Xing (2008), Tao (1994), and Baxter (1983), white and black have historically held significance among color terms in numerous languages, including within the context of Arabic culture. These colours are distinguished by their strong contrasts and ease of identification, representing concepts such as white future versus black future, or white-hearted versus black-hearted. Berlin and Kay identified black and white as the most fundamental among the basic colour terms because they are universal, and their presence precedes the recognition of other colours. This finding suggests that black and white are culturally and linguistically significant colours, and play an essential role in the human perception and categorization of colours (Berlin & Kay, 1969).

Despite having different cultural backgrounds, people have common feelings about the aesthetic experience of colours. There are also similarities in the connotations and meanings of colour terms across cultures, and this similarity

can be attributed to the universality of the human mind and the similar way it works. However, variations in customs, religions, geographies, and other cultural factors inevitably give colour words different connotations in both Arabic and Spanish adages. Colour words possess connotative meanings beyond their literal sense and can be influenced by cultural backgrounds. Arabic and Spanish exhibit differences in the cultural connotations associated with colour words. These words are not solely defined by their literal meanings and carry additional associative meanings shaped by cultural factors. Therefore, speakers of Arabic and Spanish may endow colour words with distinct connotations due to the influence of their respective cultural backgrounds. It's important to be mindful of the cultural connotations and nuances of colour words when communicating across different cultures to avoid potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Sensitivity to cultural context and awareness of the diverse meanings associated with colours can promote effective communication and mutual understanding.

Allan (2007) defines connotations as the pragmatic consequences resulting from an expression's denotation or reference, as well as the experiences, beliefs, and biases linked to the usual contexts in which it is employed. The connotative significance of a term or phrase extends beyond its explicit or primary meaning and includes emotional, cultural, or personal associations. Connotative meanings can vary based on the context in which a word is used, as well as on cultural and personal associations. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the connotations of words when communicating, as they can significantly impact the message being conveyed.

III. DISCUSSION

Adages are concise traditional sayings that convey practical wisdom and reflect cultural values. Colours also hold cultural significance, representing varied meanings and emotions in different cultures. When adages mention specific colours, those colours add cultural connotations to the adages' meanings. Therefore, the connection between adages and colours is significant, as the cultural connotations of colours shape how the adage is interpreted and valued within a specific cultural context. Therefore, this section discusses a compilation of adages that are specifically concerned with the white and black colours in the Arabic and Spanish cultures. Each adage is accompanied by its English translation and connotative meaning, providing insights into the implied or symbolic significance behind the adage. However, it is important to note that this list is not exclusive, as it only includes a random selection of adages related to colours in Arabic and Spanish.

The adages, included in this section, concerned with the white and black colours, have been gathered from well-trusted sources. The Arabic adages have been carefully selected from well-known works such as "Djamharat al-Amthal" (جمهرة الأمثال) written by Al-Askari (1988) and "Majma' al-Amthal" (مجمع الأمثال), compiled by Maidani (2017). Similarly, the Spanish adages have been extracted from respected compilations like "El libro de los refranes," authored by Jose Maria Sbarbi y Osuna, and "Refranero Español," compiled by Juan Manuel Oliver.

A. White Colour in Arabic Adages

Arabic Adage	English Translation	Connotative Meaning of White Colour
البياض نصف الحسن	Whiteness is half of beauty.	Al-bayad means "whiteness" or "the state of being white." The connotative meaning of the colour white in this adage is purity, cleanliness, and beauty.
له علينا يد بيضاء	He has a white hand over us.	The connotative meaning of the colour white in this expression is associated with purity and generosity. A person with a "white hand" is someone who is honest and generous.
بيض الله وجهك	May Allah whiten your face!	The connotative meaning of the colour white in this context is associated with purity, blessing, and good fortune. This expression is often used to show gratitude, appreciation, and respect to someone who has done a good deed or helped others.
هو أبيض الكبد	He has a white liver.	The meaning here is associated with purity, cleanliness, and goodness.
ما كل بيضاء شحمة ولا كل سوداء ثمرة	Not all-white is fat, and not all-black is a date.	This adage means that not everything that appears good or pure (white) is what it appears, and not everything that appears bad or evil (black) is necessarily bad or evil.
ادخلوا سودا في بياض	Bring blackness into whiteness	This adage is associated with the idea of purity, innocence, or righteousness. The expression can be used in various contexts, such as warning against the influence of negative people or behaviors in a good environment or situation.
أحسن من بياض العطايا في سواد المطالب	Better than the whiteness of gifts in the darkness of demands	The meaning here is associated with purity, goodness, and generosity. The expression can also be used to highlight the value of hard work and earning things through effort and determination, rather than relying solely on gifts or favors.
أجمل من الظبي الأعور	Whiter than a white-tailed gazelle	The gazelle's forehead is considered to be a symbol of beauty and perfection in Arabic culture.
أذل من بيضة البئد	More insignificant than an egg in the countryside	This is to say that something is insignificant or unimportant. The expression is often used in a negative context to describe a humiliating or embarrassing situation.
السودا يخلو بعد البياض	The black becomes sweet after the white.	The statement here emphasizes the significance of diversity in producing beauty, as well as the role of contrast in promoting positivity.
بياض الشيب حلية العقل	White hair is the adornment of	The meaning here is associated with wisdom and experience. The

	the intellect	whiteness of hair is considered a positive attribute, rather than a negative one, as it represents the accumulation of knowledge and experience that comes with age.
أعز من الغراب الأعصم	Stronger than the raven whose leg is white	The white feathers of the crow are considered a unique and prized feature; therefore, the bird is highly regarded and beloved. The connotation of whiteness in this phrase is one of value, rarity, and beauty.
قلبه أبيض	He has a white heart	The meaning here is that the person with a white heart has a kind, pure, or good-hearted nature.
أبيض العينين	He has white eyes.	The colour white here is used in this context to indicate that someone has lost his sight completely because of grief and sorrow.
يكذب كذبة بيضاء	He tells a white lie.	The connotation of the colour white in this phrase is generally seen as less negative or deceitful compared to other colours that may be associated with more serious lies or deception. A "white lie" is generally understood to be a lie that is told with good intentions, often to avoid hurting someone's feelings or to avoid conflict.
أجذب من سنة بيضاء	Barer than a white year	The connotation of the colour white in this phrase is negative, suggesting a sense of deprivation, emptiness, or lack of fulfilment. It is used to indicate a year of little rain.

B. Black Colour in Arabic Adages

Arabic Adage	English Translation	Connotative Meaning of Black Colour
أسود من ليلة كربلاء	Blacker than the night of Karbala	The meaning here is associated with mourning, sadness, and tragedy. The expression is often used to describe a moment or a situation that is marked by intense sorrow and lamentation.
الوجه مثل الصبح مبيض والشعر مثل الليل مسود	The face is as white as dawn and the hair is as black as night.	Black is seen here as a colour of beauty and elegance, which complements the beauty of the white colour of the face.
وجهه أسود وفعله أبيض	His face is black, but his actions are white.	The meaning of black here is often associated with darkness, negativity, and sin. The expression also implies that despite the negative appearance of the person's face, his actions are positive and good, as represented by the colour white.
كلمته فما رد عليّ بيضاء ولا سوداء	I spoke to him, and he didn't reply to me with either white or black	The meaning here is associated with clarity and certainty. The person could not be countered or responded to with any arguments or excuses, whether good or bad.
سود الله وجهك	May Allah blacken your face!	The meaning of blackness here is associated with shame and dishonour. This expression could be intended to express anger, disdain, or a wish for harm to inflict someone.
هو أسود الكبد	He has a black liver.	Blackness here is associated with negativity, particularly in relation to emotions such as anger, bitterness, and hatred.
أشد سواداً من حلك الغراب	Blacker than a crow's feathers	The connotative meaning of the colour black in this expression is one of darkness, negativity, and even danger.
أعزى من الحجر الأسود	More naked than the black stone in Ka'ba	Blackness here means poverty, destitution, and humility. This expression is used to emphasize the dire financial situation or extreme impoverishment of someone.
ليس كل من سود وجهه قال: أنا حداد	Not everyone with a black face says, 'I am a blacksmith.'	The black colour is used metaphorically to refer to someone with a "blackened" or "darkened" face. It tells us that appearances can be deceiving and that not everything is what it seems.
الدين مسود الخدين، هم في الليل وعار في النهار	Debt is blackening cheeks, causing worry at night, and disgrace in the daylight.	The connotation of black colour in this adage suggests a negative or unfavorable state of negativity and disgrace because of debt.
غريت بالسود، وفي البيض الكثر	I was deceived by the black, but there is an abundance in the white	Black colour is associated with scarcity, insufficiency, and badness. The expression can also be used to encourage people to look for the positive aspects of life, even when faced with adversity or hardship.
رمى بسمته الأسود والمذمى	He threw his black and blood-stained arrow.	This expression highlights the negative connotations associated with the colour black in this particular context, emphasizing the notion of intentional harm or malicious actions.
أشام من قطة سوداء	Darker than a black cat	The colour black in this expression is often used in a negative or derogatory sense, suggesting an exaggerated or intensified association with darkness, evil, or bad luck.
قلبه أسود	He has a black heart	The colour black is used metaphorically to represent negative qualities such as evil, cruelty, malice, or a lack of empathy or compassion.
أسود العينين	He has black eyes.	In Arabic culture, dark or black-coloured eyes are considered attractive or desirable.

C. White Colour in Spanish Adages

Spanish Adage	English Translation	Connotative Meaning of White Colour
Blanca y en botella, leche	White and in a bottle, it's milk.	In this saying, the colour white is used metaphorically to represent something that is clear, evident, or unmistakable. The connotation of white colour in this context suggests purity, clarity, and transparency.
Manos blancas no ofenden	White hands do not offend.	The meaning here is associated with innocence, purity, and lack of malicious intent.

Cada día pan blanco hace apetitoso el bazo	Everyday white bread makes the spleen appetizing.	The connotative meaning here is one of simplicity, purity, and basicness. In this context, the connotation of white may imply tradition, familiarity, or a sense of comfort associated with a simple food item.
Quedarse en blanco	To be left blank	The white colour is associated with the absence or lack of clarity. In this expression, it suggests a state of confusion or inability to recall information, where the person's mind is "blank".
Ellos son blancos y se entienden	They are white and they understand each other.	The colour white in this saying connotes purity and clarity in communication and understanding.
Amistad leal y franca, mosca blanca	Loyal and frank friendship, white flies	The colour white here is associated with rarity or uniqueness, as white flies are relatively uncommon compared to other types of flies.
Ando enamorado, y no tengo blanca ni cornado	I'm in love, and I don't have a penny to my name.	Whiteness here suggests bankruptcy such as a lack of resources or options. The saying implies that the speaker does not have either a "white" or "cornado" coin.
Helada blanca, madrina es del agua	White frost, godmother of water	The colour white in this saying may connote positive qualities of purity, delicacy, and serenity, as well as the importance of water for life.
Una pared blanca sirve al loco de carta	A white wall serves as paper for a crazy person.	The colour white in this phrase may suggest positive connotations of purity, simplicity, and openness, contrasting with the connotations of the unconventional or irrational behavior of a crazy person.
Cuando el español canta, o rabia o no tiene blanca	When the Spanish sing, they are either angry or have no money.	The colour white in this saying might connote negative connotations of poverty, simplicity, or lack of resources, contrasting with the intense emotions expressed by Spanish people when they sing.
Ir de punta en blanco	To go tip to white or to dress elegantly	The colour white is associated with elegance, purity, and formality.
Inviernos de nieve blanco, caldo chimenea y manto	Winters of white snow: chimney, broth, and mantle	In this context, the connotation of the colour white is one of purity, cleanliness, and peacefulness, as snow can be seen as a symbol of a fresh start, a new beginning, or a pristine landscape.
Abogado en el concejo, hace de lo blanco negro	A lawyer in the council makes white into black.	The connotation of the colour white in this phrase is often used to highlight the negative or unethical behavior of the lawyer, suggesting a lack of integrity, honesty, or transparency.
¿Adentro ratones, que todo lo blanco es harina!	Come in, mice, because everything white is flour!	It indicates an ancient fable in which the oldest mouse in the colony alerts his fellows of the presence of the cat, which has been coated in flour to hunt in disguise. By extension, it warns how deceptive appearances often can be. The connotation of the colour white in this phrase is often used in a negative sense, suggesting a hidden or deceptive nature behind something that appears innocent or pure on the surface.
Bofetada con guante blanco	Slap with a white glove	This phrase is often used to describe an action that appears polite or refined on the surface but may carry underlying implications or consequences. The connotation of the colour white in this context is used to convey a sense of elegance, formality, or politeness.
Pasar la noche en blanco	To spend a sleepless night, due to emotion or pain, is always revealing.	The connotation of whiteness in this expression is not associated with its typical meanings of purity, innocence, or cleanliness, but rather used to describe the state of being awake during the night, which is often associated with darkness and restlessness.
Mas blanco que la nieve	whiter than snow	is associated with qualities such as purity, innocence, cleanliness, and perfection.

D. Black Colour in Spanish Adages

Adage (Spanish)	English Translation	Connotative Meaning of Black Colour
Trabajar como un negro	Working like a black	It is a racist connotation. It is considered offensive and insensitive as it perpetuates negative stereotypes. It suggests that slave-like, hard work is associated with being black.
A burro negro no le busques pelo blanco	Don't look for white hair on a black donkey!	The colour black in this saying is associated with something dark, obscure, or difficult. It suggests accepting the reality of a situation or person, rather than trying to change it.
A buen hambre, no hay pan negro	When you're really hungry, there is no such thing as black bread	The meaning here is associated with the idea of scarcity or deprivation. It emphasizes the urgency and importance of satisfying hunger, regardless of the quality or type of food.
Vestido negro honra a vivos y a muertos	Wearing black honors both the living and the dead	Black colour in this saying is associated with formality, elegance, and respect. Black is a colour that can be worn to show respect or pay homage to both the living and the deceased.
Casarme quiero, y sea con un triste negro	I want to get married, even if to a sad black man.	The connotative meaning of the colour black in this saying is likely negative and carries a sense of sadness or melancholy. The black colour here is associated with the idea of being an outsider, of not belonging to the mainstream or the dominant culture.
El negro, por mucho que mame, no blanquea	No matter how much he is breastfed, the black man won't become white.	The meaning here is associated with the idea of inherent qualities or characteristics that cannot be changed.
No hay olla sin ningún garbanzo negro	There is no pot without any black chickpeas.	The black here is associated with the idea of something that is difficult, problematic, or troubling.
Gato negro trae mala suerte	Black cat brings bad luck	The meaning here is associated with the superstition that a black cat is

		a bad omen or brings bad luck.
El mejor suegro, vestido de negro	The best father-in-law is dressed in black.	The use of the colour black in this saying is likely used metaphorically to imply that a father-in-law who has passed away can no longer cause problems or conflicts, and therefore, is considered the "best" or easiest to deal with.
Esto es como una cena de negros	This is like a black dinner.	The use of the colour black in this context may suggest that the situation is akin to a stereotypical portrayal of a wild or unruly gathering of African Americans.
Mientras más se lava el cuervo más negro parece	The more the crow is washed, the blacker it looks.	The connotation of black in this saying implies negativity or undesirability. It is associated with the idea of inherent or unchangeable qualities or characteristics.
Al negro llaman Juan Blanco	They call the black man white Juan	By using the colour white to describe the black man, the adage may be employing irony or sarcasm to highlight the incongruity or contradiction between the expected and the actual.
De oveja blanca, carnero negro	Of white sheep, black ram	The connotation of white in this saying is associated with positive qualities or attributes, while the connotation of black is associated with negative or undesirable qualities. It may be used to highlight a contrast or dichotomy between two opposing elements or to express a sense of irony or paradox.
La blancura de la nieve hace al cisne negro	The whiteness of the snow makes the swan black.	The connotation of the colour black in this context is associated with a contrast or a comparison. The saying suggests that the perceived beauty or purity of something, represented by the whiteness of snow, can make something else appear less desirable or less perfect, as represented by the swan being portrayed as black.
Ni perro negro, ni mozo gallego	Neither a black dog nor a Galician servant	The connotation of black here is typically used to represent something that is seen as negative, undesirable, or unwanted. It can imply a sense of bad luck, misfortune, or inferiority.
No puede ser más negro que sus alas el cuervo	The raven's wings cannot be darker than the raven itself.	The meaning here is associated with inherent characteristics or qualities that are consistent and unchangeable.
Quien todo lo ve negro, poco ve	Whoever sees everything as black sees little.	In this adage, the connotation of the colour black is associated with negativity or pessimism.

E. Contrast of Connotative Meanings of White and Black Colours in Spanish and Arabic Adages

Time passes by, but adages remain. They embody social codes, norms, and accumulated meanings. They are part of the normative discourse and part of the popular social narrative within the cultural hegemonic model, offering an interpretation of the world. Adages serve as open windows that provide unique perspectives on life, events, and social relationships. Similarly, colours hold cultural significance, as they carry different meanings and emotions across various cultures. When adages make references to particular colours, those colours can contribute cultural connotations to the adages' meanings. Thus, the relationship between adages and colours is intimately linked, since the cultural connotations of colours can shape the interpretation and significance of the adage in a specific cultural setting.

The contrast between white and black, two achromatic colours, has been an important part of colour symbolism in culture. These colours are often used to represent opposing concepts and ideas. They play a significant role in phraseological units that encompass diverse facets of human life, symbolizing opposing concepts such as goodness-evil, life-death, and light-darkness. For example, the phrase "كذبة بيضاء" ("white lie") refers to a minor, harmless lie that is told to spare someone's feelings, while the phrase "Oveja negra" (black sheep) is used to describe someone who is the outcast or the troublemaker in a family or group. In summary, the contrast between white and black is a potent symbol that portrays opposing forces and concepts, which are fundamental to the human experience.

According to Philip in his P.H.D dissertation *Collocation and Connotation: A Corpus-Based Investigation of Colour Words in English And Italian* (2003, p. 22), the debate around the classification of black and white as colours stems from the fact that they encompass all hues in the spectrum when blended:

Black absorbs all light rays, and white reflects them. As black is the colour of darkness and white the colour of light, they have been symbolically related to evil and good respectively, through further symbolism which dictates that goodness is pure and inspired by divine light, whereas its opposite, evil, is impure and has an affinity with the dark. This forms the basis for all Christian-influenced symbolism relating to these two shades, and also explains the role of both colours to express mourning, with black representing melancholy and white, the divine and heaven.

One similarity between Arabic and Spanish cultures is the symbolic association of the colour white with purity, honesty, and goodness. This cultural symbolism is reflected in adages in both languages. For example, the Spanish saying "Mas blanco que la nieve" (whiter than snow) uses the colour white to represent purity and goodness. Similarly, the Arabic adage "البياض نصف الحسن" (Whiteness is half of the beauty) also attributes positive connotations to the colour white, associating it with beauty. Another similarity between the two cultures is that the white colour is sometimes associated with negativity. In Spanish, the expression "Quedarse en blanco" (to be left blank) uses the white colour to convey a sense of emptiness or void. Similarly, in Arabic, the expression "أجذب من سنة بيضاء" (barer than a white year) uses the white colour to symbolize negativity or lack of fulfillment. It is literally used to indicate a year of little rain.

In many cultures, including Arabic and Spanish cultures, the colour black is often associated with negative connotations and symbolic meanings such as darkness, evil, misfortune, and even death. This association is reflected in

adages. For example, the Arabic adage "أشد سوادا من حلك الغراب" (Blacker than a crow's feathers) uses the colour black to emphasize a sense of extreme darkness or deep negativity. Crows are known for their entirely black plumage, lending them a distinctive appearance. The colour black has long been associated with darkness, often symbolizing the night. Consequently, crows are frequently regarded as bearers of ill omens. In Arab culture when a lone crow rises above the roof, it is interpreted as a harbinger of the death of the person living there. Furthermore, if a crow caws near a sick person, it is seen as a sign that his end may be near. This pessimistic symbolism does not exist in Spanish culture.

The association between the colour black and evil may trace back to a fundamental fear of darkness. Similarly, in Arab culture, crow feathers were used to accentuate the extreme negativity of a situation or condition. Moreover, in Spanish culture, the saying "Gato negro trae mala suerte" (Black cat brings bad luck) is frequently heard, with a superstition that suggests encountering a black cat crossing one's path, particularly if it moves from left to right, brings bad luck.

The Spanish adage "El Negro, por Mucho que mame, no blanquea" (A black man, no matter how much he breastfeeds, will never become white) employs the colour black to convey a sense of permanence or inevitability. It leverages the cultural associations of the colour black and its metaphorical reference to a black man to create a compelling image, suggesting that certain traits are unchangeable and resistant to effort or circumstance. This metaphor establishes a connection between the enduring nature of these attributes and the immutable quality of the colour black.

In the Bible, the white is used as a symbol of purity, holiness, and the redemption of sin. Being forgiven by God results in becoming as pure and immaculate as snow: "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51: 7). On the contrary, the Bible utilizes the black colour to represent adverse concepts such as evil, gloom, judgment, and death. Furthermore, Jude 13 portrays hell as "the blackest of darkness": "They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever".

Similarly, the same can be said about the Holy Quran. It contains many verses that refer to the symbolic meanings of the colours black and white. There is a clear contrast in the symbolism of black and white. For example, (يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ) (3:106-107)

(The day faces will be white, and faces will be black: as for those whose faces will be black: "Did you deny after your faith? Then taste the punishment for what you denied!" And as for those whose faces will be white: in the mercy of God; therein they abide eternally).

White faces are attributed to those who have received Allah's mercy, representing happiness and delight, while black faces are associated with those who have been deprived of Allah's mercy, connoting sins, shame, and bad deeds. Thus, from a religious perspective, black is linked with negative meanings such as sins, scandals, and impurity, while white represents positive meanings of innocence, purity, and good deeds.

In the Spanish culture, black is associated with negative connotations, including racist ones like the expression *trabajar como un negro* "working like a black person." However, in modern English, it is more appropriate to use the term "people of colour" to refer to individuals with dark skin, regardless of race (Álvarez Rodríguez, 2020, p. 70). Black slaves in Spanish colonies were forced to perform the most difficult tasks on sugar cane or tobacco plantations, but this expression was not used in the Arabic culture. So, in Spain, you use the term "trabajar como un negro" to mean hard work.

The cultural connotations of colours can significantly vary among different languages and cultures. One illustrative example of this divergence can be found in the contrasting connotations of the colour black between Arab and Spanish cultures. In Arabic, black is sometimes associated with bravery and courage, as exemplified in the adage "وجهه أسود وفعله أبيض" (His face is black, but his actions are white), which suggests that even someone who looks dark and intimidating can be brave in battle. In contrast, in the Spanish culture, black is not typically associated with bravery or courage. This illustrates how the same colour can have vastly different meanings and associations in different cultures and highlights the importance of understanding the cultural context in which a particular colour or symbol is used.

Black in Arabic adages is sometimes associated with religious mourning and sadness. For example, the adage "أسود من ليلة كربلاء" (blacker than the night of Karbala) refers to the Islamic Shia holiday of Ashura, which commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. The black is worn during this holiday as a sign of mourning and grief. Conversely, although white is often connected with purity and innocence, it possesses a powerful negative connotation in Arab societies due to its association with death and grief. As a result, in Arabic culture, the white shroud and coffin are utilized to represent the deceased and their passage to the afterlife, which is frequently referred to as the "death mark".

In Arabic culture, black is occasionally linked to positive connotations, particularly in regard to beauty, as evidenced by the adage: "الوجه مثل الصبح مبيض والشعر مثل الليل مسود" The face is as white as dawn and the hair is as black as night." Black eyes and black hair are commonly viewed as symbols of beauty, and Arab women are often praised for their gorgeous black eyes and long black hair. It is worth mentioning that in Spanish culture, black can also have positive connotations, as exemplified by the saying: *Vestido negro honra a vivos y a muertos* "Wearing black honors both the living and the dead". Wearing a black dress is frequently associated with elegance, style, and sophistication. Men and women in Spain may choose to wear black as a means of showing their reverence for their culture and its customs.

We can observe that in the Arabic adage, the white colour is not associated with snow. Although it does snow in some regions of the Arab world, snow is not as integral to daily life as it is in Spain, where it snows frequently, particularly in the north. In Spain, people would calculate their future harvests based on the abundance or absence of snow, or on the time when it appears. Therefore, sayings such as *Mas blanco que la nieve* (whiter than snow) do not exist in Arabic.

In Spain, there are particular expressions that carry cultural connotations and are absent in Arabic, such as "pan negro" (black bread), which pertains to the use of rye flour that is not as common in the Arab world as it is in Spain. Another instance is "Pata Negra," which references a high-quality Iberian ham and serves as a symbol of excellence and authenticity. Nevertheless, since consumption of pork is strictly forbidden in the Islamic faith, this expression cannot be utilized.

In short, these adages serve as examples of how colours, such as black and white, can carry significant cultural connotations and symbolism that are deeply embedded in language and reflect a culture's beliefs, values, and social norms. Colours can be used in adages as powerful metaphors to express complex cultural meanings and perceptions. By using the black and white in these adages, the cultural connotations and symbolism associated with them are invoked. This, in turn, reinforces the cultural beliefs and values associated with that colour in that particular society.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the commonality of languages in their use of adages, a phenomenon attributed to the universality of human thought processes and cognitive patterns. The shared connotations of white and black in both Arabic and Spanish adages illustrate how cultural symbolism can transcend linguistic and geographical boundaries. At the same time, the variations in these connotations reflect the unique values, beliefs, and traditions of each respective culture.

In the course of this study, significant differences were uncovered in how black and white-related adages are employed in Spanish and Arabic cultures, stemming from their distinct cultural foundations. However, a particularly noteworthy discovery emerged: despite these cultural distinctions, expressions related to these colors in both Arabic and Spanish often convey fundamental themes and concepts. This implies that while linguistic structures and idiomatic expressions may differ, there are universal cross-cultural themes associated with black and white that transcend linguistic diversity. This emphasizes the idea that certain concepts can possess universally understandable meanings across diverse languages and cultures, regardless of differences in cultural context and language.

Additionally, the study underscores the critical role of cultural context in interpreting the symbolic meanings of colors. White, typically associated with positive attributes like purity and cleanliness, can also symbolize mourning and death. Similarly, black, often linked to negative connotations such as darkness and death, can also convey elegance and beauty. The cultural significance of colors significantly contributes to enhancing intercultural communication and fostering cultural understanding.

In summary, effective cross-cultural communication and the reduction of misunderstandings demand more than mere mastery of a language's vocabulary, grammar, and phonetics; it mandates acquiring knowledge and insight into the culture intertwined with that language. Language and culture share a deep, mutually influential relationship. The constantly evolving and subjective connotations of words emphasize the complexity of cross-cultural communication, stressing the importance of factoring in cultural subtleties when deciphering symbolic expressions. Recognizing and respecting these cultural distinctions becomes pivotal in fostering successful interactions and preventing misunderstandings when engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

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